

SONGS COULD TRAVEL FREE

Carolyn Davis's Scots-Irish family did come from Northern Ireland (County Antrim) in the mid-eighteenth century, just as her song says. "Big Robert" Barnhill ultimately settled his family in North Carolina and served in the Revolutionary War, along with sons, James and John. His descendants emigrated west and settled in the piney woods of East Texas. Carolyn's childhood visits to her grandmother (Remember Minnie? Maybe we'll see her in a later issue) frequently included drives out to Ebenezer Cemetery in Camp County, Texas, where she listened to stories about the ancestors laid to rest there. This is not the only song that has resulted from Carolyn's extensive genealogical research, but it is definitely one of the best among a number of very good ones. You can hear Carolyn perform this song at <https://youtu.be/AJQFxyA7ELc>, or on the HFMS Audio Archive page at http://www.houstonfolkmusic.org/HFS_Audio_Archive.html.

JIGS AND REELS

By Carolyn Davis

D **A** **G** **A**
My music came from Ireland –seventeen fifty-three.
D **A** **G** **A**
Sailed from northern Irish coast -- with my family.
D **A** **G** **A**
They could not bring a scythe or plow, but songs could travel free.
D **A** **G** **A** **D**
So jigs and reels and ballads journeyed with them 'cross the sea.

Big Robert left his violin in his motherland
But Margaret hummed a ballad, Robert held her hand.
Baby John lay at her breast, lulled by her lullaby –
And Robert whistled softly, gazing into the endless sky.

When last they reached the New World soil, they quickly journeyed on.
Then Robert built a cabin and a fiddle with pine wood strong.
The family grew, and each child knew the words to every tune.
They worked sunrise until sunset – made music 'neath the moon.

When fives of revolution beckoned, Robert and eldest sons.
They left their Appalachian home, fought till freedom won.
Their safe return was welcomed by Margaret's deep blue eyes.
And jigs and reels and ballads, and sweetest lullabies.

Big Robert's heart was full of song right to his final days.

His grandson little Robert loved that fiddle and learned to play.
Young Robert grew and journeyed west with fiddle and family.
Built his home in Texas hills with finest pine wood trees.

My music came from Ireland with my family.
Big Robert and dear Margaret carried it here for me.
Their jigs and reels and ballads and sweetest lullabies
I play on strings and whistles gazing into the endless skies.

I play on strings and whistles gazing into the endless skies.